1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

153 Numbers are practically meaningless to them and
● 802 numerical concepts play a very small rôle; in any question demanding numbers they will nearly always give in answer three or four alternatives. In some situations this is almost ludicrous; except for one or two lamas nobody knows his own age or even that of his youngest children in years; they all know the year they were born and what year they are now in, but if a child was born in Dog year they would be quite unable to work out its age today (1937 was Ox year and the child would be four) and they might just as well say that the child was two or eight. More than that, if you asked a person how many people were living in his house he would almost certainly get the number wrong; he could naturally recite immediately the names or rather the kinship terms of the people in his house; but it does not cross his mind to tot up the number and it is a mental operation of which nearly all Lepchas are incapable. The Lepchas count by twenties and use their fingers for all calculations; they count with the thumb against the fingers, putting the thumb on the base of the little finger for one, the first joint for two, the second joint for three, the tip for four and then going down to the base of the next finger for five and so on. There used to be long consultations to try and work out in how many days a fixed date for a calendrical feast would arrive; and on one occasion everybody except one lama arrived a day late, and the Muns frequently made a mistake of a day or more for their special festivals. They are quite incapable of working out what money they should receive for their cardamum; they may know that they have ten maunds and that each maund is worth Rs. 12; but unless they use sticks or some other memory guide they have absolutely no idea of what the total should be. The Mandal has to keep in his head the taxes due from each household but he does this by remembering the words and not the figures.

153 The Lepchas do not dramatise; and they do not alter their pace of thought or action except in emergencies which for the reason that they demand such alteration are considered particularly unpleasant. My impression is that the Lepchas think much more slowly than either the Nepali or the Indians, but since my knowledge of both these races is slight this impression is of little value; they certainly think quicker than the ordinary Somerset farm labourer, though infinitely slower than a European town dweller. I got the impression that they talked quickly, but that I think was due to the fact that the language was an unfamiliar one, and that I was straining to catch every shade of meaning.